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LONDON AND PARIS FOR AFRICA WATCHERS

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SUBJECT: CHAD: Inter-ethnic Fighting in Guereda

¶1. (SBU) While Humanitarian workers report that fighting in around Adre subsided last night after some 200 houses in different villages were burned and 120 civilian and combatant wounded hospitalized, the situation around Guereda remains tense. Some 30 rebels are reported dead in fighting between former FUC (United Front for Change) rebels of the Tama tribe and the primarily Zaghawa militias of the RAFD (Rally of Democratic Forces). The RAFD denies any involvement in the clashes, while the FUC alleges that the Chadian army was "complicit" in the militia attacks. The Chadian government has dismissed FUC charges describing the fighting as inter-communal and noting that the murder by FUC members January 29 of five Zaghawa men at a market in the area may have precipitated a revenge attack by militia.

¶2. (U) Note: The GOC signed a peace agreement with FUC leader Mahamat Nour in December ending fighting with that group. The FUC unsuccessfully attacked N'Djamena in April 2006 suffering heavy losses. There have been no reported incidents of fighting since the signing. End note.

¶3. (SBU) The famine-early-warning NGO (FEWSNET) described the growing Zaghawa-Tama ethnic tension and clashes in the Guereda and Iriba (Biltine Department) areas as intense and of increasing concern to humanitarian agencies operating there. At the Kounoungou camp, a refugee and a soldier of the FUC were killed on January 23 and on the night of 31 January, a Tama family violently attacked a Zaghawa family at Am Zouer. Yesterday's fighting around Guereda left 33 wounded FUC soldiers at Guereda hospital, according to a FUC commander. NGO workers at Guereda report ten to 15 wounded per day being admitted to the hospital.

¶4. (SBU) According to a UNHCR worker in Guereda, the threat of Zaghawa militia attacking Guereda is very real. Noting that, "we have always been wary of this," the worker commented that the FUC are in defensive positions around the city. He added that the fighting in Adre could also result in ANT forces in Guereda joining the fight there and thus leaving Zaghawa and Tama militias to battle it out.

¶5. (SBU) Humanitarian agencies based in Iriba report that only a few days of food remain for distributions at the Am Nabak camp located at 45 kilometers from Guereda. CARE, UNHCR and WFP note that Am Nabak distributions could be disrupted because of the security situation. MSF/France has evacuated its personnel from Adre.

¶6. (SBU) Comment: The Tama and Zaghawa groups have long been rivals. The Tama have gone so far as to ally themselves with Arab clans and participate in Janjaweed attacks in Sudan against the Zaghawa. The December peace deal between Deby and the predominantly Tama FUC of Mahamat Nour may not be a reliable basis of stability, certainly as long as local anti-Deby Zaghawa rebels continue to reject it. End comment.

¶7. (U) Tripoli minimize considered.
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